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Misconceptions regarding the reading abilities of Kingston, Jamaica, junior high school students are discussed. Preliminary planning procedures, details of the operational plan for the project classes, and a description of diagnostic studies, methods, and materials used are presented. Particular problems encountered; summaries of results and conclusions; and recommendations for classroom organization, for methods of teaching reading to junior high school students, and for materials are included. The problem of reading retardation in Jamaica is seen as caused primarily by the lack of teachers trained to teach reading at all levels. Charts and tables are included. (RT)

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REMEDIAL TEACHING OF READING IN SELECTED JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN JAMAICA

AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

By

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September 1968

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Preface

The substance of this paper is a description and an explanation of an action research study concerned with the teaching of reading in seven seventh grades in two junior secondary schools in the Corporate Area of Kingston, Jamaica. Most of these children were considered unable to undertake the program usually offered in local secondary schools because their academic achievement was inadequate. The term "backward children", or "backward readers", was frequently applied to them.

The writers hypothesized that the problem in a large number of cases lay in failure to read adequately and sought opportunity to test this hypothesis.

Action research is one way of using group dynamics and related concepts in the implementation of research findings. The goal is the application of results and improvement of practice through group planning. A problem is chosen because of a felt need and because of its importance to practice in a given situation. The essential focus is on studying a local problem in a local setting. The outcomes of such research need not be held up to the criterion of general validity. It is sufficient that the results be valid for the situation to which they apply. The interest is in

the particular subjects investigated rather than in the theoretical population represented by the sample under study. The design may be modified during the course of the program. The final step is that of testing out the consolidated plans in action and assessing their effectiveness.

The organization of this paper follows generally the sequence of problem-solving. The chapters vary in length and in style. While the general outline of the text was prepared after joint planning and discussion between the two writers, each writer was given primary responsibility for the writing of certain chapters. Chapter 1 is, in great part, a revision of the original proposal presented to the Ministry of Education for permission to do this study. Chapter 3 and the summaries of the results of the study in Chapter 4 were written by Gloria Box. Dorothy Cady wrote Chapter 2 and these sections of Chapter 4: particular problems encountered, conclusions of the investigators, recommendations, and suggested topics for further action research.

Mrs. Box and Mrs. Cady are indebted to many people -- to the Honorable Edwin Allen, Minister of Education, to Mr. R. N. Murray, Director of the Institute of Education, University of the West Indies, to Dr. Ralph Evans, Chief of

Party of the San Diego State College Foundation Team under contract to the United States Agency for International Development in Jamaica, and to the Education Officers in the Ministry of Education for permission to undertake this study and for assistance and encouragement in carrying it out.

The writers are particularly grateful to the headmistress of one of the project schools, Sister M. Philomena, and to the headmaster of the other project school, Mr. Donald Collins, whose interest in, and cooperation with, the project were unstinting.

This study could not have been done without the earnest efforts and enthusiastic cooperation of the project teachers: Miss Beryl Beckford, Miss Arabella Jones, Mrs. Anastasia Reynolds, Miss Monica Wilson, Miss Novlette Douglas, Mrs. Ivy Morris, and Miss Melrose Bernard. There will be children in Jamaica whose futures assuredly will be brighter because they were fortunate in having these women as their teachers.

Finally, the writers wish to express their gratitude to the distinguished Jamaican educator, Mr. Dudley Grant, senior lecturer at the Institute of Education, University of the West Indies, who helped draft the proposal, enlisted the attention of

the Ministry of Education, and facilitated the implementation of the study.

Gloria Box

Dorothy Cady

Kingston, Jamaica, September 1968.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

At a Junior Secondary School Conference held at the Trench Town Comprehensive School on September 16, 1966, principals and grade teachers expressed "great concern over the vase number of Grade 7 students who had not mastered the basic Primary School reading skills".[1] It was observed that the teachers were "clamouring for aid to arrive at some organizational pattern whereby Grade 7 students . . . could be grouped for effective reading instruction and remedial work planned and developed to meet the needs of the weak students".[2]

Mrs. Gloria Box and Mr. Dudley Grant felt that this "concern" should be documented by some sort of survey before attempts at helping teachers should be considered. The survey, conducted on

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[1] Dudley Grant and Gloria Box, A Study of the Reading Ability of Grade 7 Students, (Jamaica: Institute of Education, University of the West Indies, 1967), pp. 3-4.

[2] Ibid., p. 4.

January 17 and 18, 1967, consisted of the administration of the Nelson Reading Test, Form A,[3] to a sampling of seventh-grade students from four parishes.[4]

The findings of the survey seemed to substantiate the opinions of the teachers, since the majority of the students tended toward the lower end of the scale on the vocabulary subtest and followed a similar pattern on the paragraph comprehension subtest. Among the recommendations suggested by the investigators were:

1. that a complete diagnostic reading inventory should be devised at the beginning of the academic year with subsequent checks at intervals of 3 months;

2. that the students who are retarded in reading should have the opportunity to get remedial help in the junior secondary school;

3. that the Ministry of Education should give some consideration to the training of teachers and specialists in remedial reading in the junior secondary schools;

4. that pupils' attitudes toward school and their attitudes toward reading should be ascertained.

The problem of serious reading difficulties of junior secondary pupils of Jamaica and the recommendations of Box and

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[3]The Nelson Reading Test. (Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962).

[4]Grant and Box, op. cit., p. 12.

Grant were given serious thought by those responsible for the education of Jamaica's children. It was decided at Ministry level in the summer of 1967 "that a team consisting of two lecturers of the Institute of Education and a U.S. AID Representative be responsible for developing remedial programmes in the Kingston Junior Secondary Schools with a view to arriving at the most suitable and helpful reading programmes for these students, organizations for reading classes, and with a view to devising instructional material that would be of great benefit to the teachers and students of this Grade".[5] The promise was made that "all useful information and instructional materials would then be circulated to the other Junior Secondary Schools throughout the island".[6]

On August 29, 1967, Mr. Dudley Grant, Lecturer, Institute of Education, University of the West Indies, wrote the Permanent Secretary as follows:

> I am pleased to inform you that the Director of the Institute of Education, University of the West Indies, has agreed to participate in the Remedial Reading Programme which your Ministry is desirous of launching in the Junior Secondary

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[5]See Appendix, p. 58

[6]See Appendix, p. 58

Schools in the corporate area.

We understand that the programme will be conducted by the Institute of Education in association with the Ministry of Education and Mrs. Dorothy Cady, U. S. AID personnel attached to the Institute of Education. The team will consist of:-

Mrs. Gloria Box	:	Institute of Education, UWI
Mrs. Dorothy Cady	:	U. S. AID and Institute of Education
Mr. S. W. Fagan	:	Education Officer, Ministry of Education
Mr. D. R. B. Grant	:	Institute of Education, UWI.[7]

Mr. Grant also requested that permission be granted (1) to the team members to do a pilot study in certain schools in the Corporate Area and (2) to the project teachers to attend weekly symposiums directed to training the teachers "in the methods and techniques of developing and conducting a remedial reading programme" and to "helping these teachers to organize their classes to facilitate individualized instruction in remedial reading."[8]

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was (1) to investigate the reading

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[7]See Appendix, p. 5

[8]See Appendix, p. 60

abilities of seventh-grade students in selected classes in the Corporate Area, (2) to plan programs directed to improving the abilities of students in the project classes, to train the teachers of these classes in methods of developing the reading skills of their students, to assist these teachers with appropriate classroom organizational patterns, and to recommend materials suitable for instruction in reading.

Basic Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, it was assumed that reading is a vital part of the child's full life, that certain skills and abilities are necessary for functional reading, and that children develop in reading ability at different rates.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Classes

This term refers to the classes taught and supervised by the project leaders.

Junior secondary school student

A junior secondary school student is a student who is

attending a seventh grade, eighth grade, or a ninth grade in Jamaica.

Leaders

The leaders are the project leaders who directed this study and who are the writers of this paper.

Listening comprehension

Listening comprehension refers to understanding what is said or read to one.

Reading

Reading is a thinking process. It involves recognition of symbols and comprehension of the ideas represented by the symbols.

"Reading"

In this paper, when the word reading is written within quotation marks, as "reading", it means pronunciation of words (or word recognition) and is not necessarily concerned with comprehension of the word in the sentence.

Remedial reader

A remedial reader refers to a student whose intelligence is within normal range, or is above the average, and who is retarded in reading.

Students

The students are the students in the classes of reading taught and supervised by the writers.

Teachers

The teachers are the teachers of the project classes unless otherwise stated.

Word-calling

Word-calling refers to the pronunciation of words only. It is used synonymously with "reading".

III. HYPOTHESES

1. There is a significant number of junior secondary school students of average or better intelligence who score below grade level on reading tests because they have not developed adequate skills in word recognition. Diagnosis of their difficulties and appropriate remediation will result in improved reading ability in a significant number of students.

2. All junior secondary school students need systematic training in reading (word recognition and comprehension) in a special reading period apart from English.

3. Comprehension skills can be effectively taught in group or all-class situations.

4. As junior secondary school students improve in reading skills, their attitudes toward school improve also.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Misconceptions which are generally accepted regarding the reading abilities of junior secondary school children are discussed in Chapter II. The preliminary planning of the study, details of the operational plan for the project classes for each term, a description of diagnostic studies, methods, and materials used, and an outline of the symposium topics are described in Chapter III. Chapter IV contains summaries of the results of the study, particular problems encountered, and conclusions of the investigators. It also contains recommendations for classroom organization, for methods of teaching reading to junior secondary school students, and for materials which might be profitably be used in reading instruction.

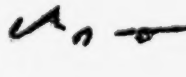
Finally, the writers have suggested areas for further action research in the field of reading in Jamaica's junior secondary schools.

CHAPTER II

MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING THE READING ABILITIES OF CHILDREN

There seem to be a number of generally-accepted assumptions regarding the reading abilities of children, the validity of various reading tests, and the interpretation of reading test results that need to be carefully scrutinized in the light of pertinent research reports:

1. Misconception: The results of a vocabulary test and a paragraph comprehension test can be average to reveal an individual pupil's ability in reading.

Fact: Paragraph comprehension is obviously dependent upon word recognition. For example, should a reader, who has no knowledge of shorthand be required to respond to these symbols,  , he would undoubtedly fail.

Comment: Should one conclude, then, that his ability in comprehension is low? The writers have not found one child in the junior secondary schools who could not give the correct response when the symbols were read to him.

2. Misconception: The pupil who has not succeeded in

learning to "read" at the age of nine years is mentally retarded and/or lacks the ability to learn to read.

Fact: There is no significant correlation between intelligence and the ability to read before the age of nine years, although the correlation becomes increasingly significant thereafter. Weakness in both word recognition and in comprehension is unusual and seems to be related to mental retardation or to severe emotional disturbance.

Fact: Most pupils of normal, or better, intelligence who have not learned to "read" at this age progress rapidly when given special training in word recognition.

3. Misconception: The score a remedial reader receives on an individual intelligence test is a valid measure of his intellectual capacity.

Fact: Many pupils who have not developed adequate ability in word recognition by the age of twelve years will score significantly lower on individual tests of intelligence, such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children or the Binet Measure of Intelligence, than they will when they have overcome their difficulties.

4. Misconceptions: Children who have received training in the skills of "reading" in the primary schools will be able to read

adequately in the junior secondary schools.

Fact: Too many pupils who have had teachers competent in the teaching of reading have failed to learn to recognize words. It is not yet known why this situation exists. Some pupils who have not had any training in word recognition develop the ability to a significant degree.

5. Misconception: Children who cannot "read" cannot comprehend.

Fact: If the material is read to these children, and if the comprehension questions are asked orally, a high percentage of them will be able to give the correct responses orally. Listening comprehension must precede reading comprehension. Many of these children rate highly in listening comprehension. It may be that their only method of obtaining information has been through listening.

Fact: These children respond to gestures as well as their counterparts who can "read".

Fact: Some of these children score higher on a comprehension test than their word recognition ability would seem to indicate. Does this occur because of the type of questions asked? Does this occur because the child recognizes key words and draws

the correct relationships? Is there some other reason?

6. Misconception: Children who have adequate recognition of words comprehend the material they "read".

Fact: Children vary widely in their skills in comprehension depending upon their past experiences and their specific training in comprehension skills. Some children simply "word-call". Some can answer questions on the first level only: those pertaining to facts, sequence, and identification. Some can answer questions on the second level: those requiring them to make inferences, anticipate outcomes, summarizing and organizing ideas for the purpose of remembering, identifying and evaluating. A few children can answer questions on the third level: those that require them to consider and evaluate what the author is saying, to react to the message, and to draw conclusions.

7. Misconception: Pupils who cannot recognize words easily, try to succeed on comprehension tests.

Fact: Observations made by the writers have indicated that these children may be overwhelmed by the task and mark answers at random.

CHAPTER III

THE STUDY

The project leaders, in preliminary conferences, planned for:

1. Conferences with officers of the Ministry of Education, principals and teachers in the project classes to work out administrative details of the study.

2. Surveys of the attitudes of the students toward school and toward reading.

3. Diagnostic studies of the reading skills of seventh-grade students in the project schools in September, 1967.

4. Remedial programs in word recognition skills for those pupils testing two or more grade levels below the seventh-grade in the project classes.

5. Special training in comprehension skills for all students in the project classes.

6. Development of individual classroom organization which will facilitate training in the skills of reading.

7. Training of project teachers by:

   a. Observation and participation in classes supervised by Mrs. Box and Mrs. Cady.

   b. Participation in a weekly seminar in which the methods used by the project leaders and the educational philosophy underlying these methods will be discussed.

8. Evaluation of the project at intervals.

9. Final report to the Minister of Education in June, 1968.

On August 29, 1967, Mr. Dudley Grant sent a digest of the operational design of the project to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education which would be associated with the project through Mr. S. W. Fagan, Principal Education Officer.

In September 1967, it was planned to use the following classes as project classes: A-1, A-3, B-1, and B-3 at School A Junior Secondary School, 7-4 and 7-5 at School B Junior Secondary School. In both schools the teachers were chosen on recommendation of their principals for their interest in the project and their expressed willingness to cooperate with the project leaders. Form RR1[1] was sent to the Project Principals.

The Ministry of Education approved:

1. The personnel recommended by Mr. Reginald Murray.

2. The use of four project classes at Holy Trinity Junior Secondary School, two project classes at Tarrant Junior Secondary School, four "control classes" at Holy Trinity JSS, and five "control classes" at Tarrant JSS.

3. The use of standardized tests in reading.

4. The use of the attitudinal survey reproduced on p.

5. Special instructional programmes for students in the project classes in word recognition skills and in

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[1]See Appendix, p. 61

comprehension skills.

6. Assistance to principals and to project teachers in classroom organization which would facilitate better instruction in reading skills.

7. Provision for project teachers to observe and participate in the programme.

8. Release time for project teachers on Friday afternoons from one to three o'clock to participate in symposiums on methods used by project leaders in the teaching of reading and the educational philosophy underlying these methods.

The Ministry of Education requested:

1. A written outline of the project early in the academic year 1967-68.

2. A final report at the conclusion of the project.

CHRISTMAS TERM 1967

During the first two weeks of the project, the following diagnostic survey instruments were used:

1. Tests of letter sounds associations for consonants, vowels, and common endings in other syllables.[2]

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[2]Paul McKee, Reading/A Program of Instruction for the Elementary School, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), pp. 229-233.

2. Informal oral reading tests of word recognition, using graded material.[3]

3. Comprehension tests.[4]

4. Inventory of attitudes toward school, reading, home, people, and vocation.[5]

5. Tests of sight words in isolation given to those unable to "read" at the second-grade level.[6]

At both schools, the tests of letter sounds association and the comprehensive tests were administered by Mrs. Box and the oral reading tests were given by Mrs. Cady. The testing periods were so arranged that both leaders carried out their testing simultaneously in different classes..

The tests of letter sounds associations were given in the classrooms where the seventh-graders belonged. The results of these tests revealed the need for concentrated teaching to be done in phonetic analysis and structural analysis of words. The areas of difficulty for these students centred mainly around the identification of initial digraphs, consonant blends, consonant

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[3]SRA Reading Laboratory, Elementary Level, 1958.

[4]Ibid.

[5]See Appendix, p. 62.

[6]Scott, Foresman Graded Word Lists.

clusters, vowel sounds, and prefixes and suffixes.

The oral reading tests were given in the library at School A and in a selected classroom at School B to the students in the project classes. The venue of testing for School B later shifted to the school library where the noise factor was greatly minimised.

On the basis of these tests, of 191 students at School A, 22% were"reading" at or below second-grade level; of 84 students at School B, 30% were "reading" at or below second-grade level.

Those students who tested below second-grade in word recognition were given tests of sight words in isolation in order to establish a level of instruction for them. It was clear that these students needed to be put in special classes where they could receive individual training in word recognition according to their needs.

The results of the comprehension tests showed up clearly general weakness in the comprehension skills. Approximately 70% of the students at School A and 83% of the students at School B showed grave weakness in the comprehension skills. It was evident then that careful attention must be given to remediation in these skills.

Early in the project, it was observed by the leaders that the

students were responding poorly to oral directions. Before arriving at a conclusion concerning the listening abilities of these students, it was decided that they be tested in listening skills. The observations of the leaders were confirmed by the low scores which the students made on the tests. Since listening comprehension must precede reading comprehension, it seemed necessary to assist the teachers in developing better listening in their students.

Reference must be made here to the attitude inventory which each student was asked to fill out. Although the responses to some items were irrelevant and at times unintelligible, some very interesting responses were noted by the leaders. A significant number of students expressed:

1. The desire to learn to read.
2. A dislike for geography, science, and mathematics.
3. The wish for someone to read to them.
4. The wish that teachers would not beat so much.
5. The wish that teachers would be kind to them.

Following the preliminary testing of the students, the instructional programme was put into effect at both schools. Training in word recognition skills was given by Mrs. Cady and training in listening comprehension and reading comprehension was

given by Mrs. Box. At each school, these students who were "reading" at or below second-grade level were removed from the classroom to the school library to receive instruction in word recognition skills. It was found necessary to segregate these seriously retarded students in order to help them develop a better self-concept and to protect them from the ridicule and jeers of their classmates. The training programme in word recognition was carefully worked out in order to ensure that the most effective means were used to teach the needed skills. Emphasis was placed on the following skills:

1. Substitution of initial consonants.
2. Substitution of initial blends.
3. Substitution of initial consonant digraphs (ch, sh, th, ph).
4. Substitution of initial consonant clusters (e. g. thr., shr).
5. Substitution of final consonants, blends, digraphs, and clusters.
6. Reversed blend (wh).
7. Identification of root words (base words).
8. Compounds - one word, hyphenated word, two words used as one.

Daily training in comprehension skills (listening and reading) was given to students "reading" at or above third-grade level. It is

to be noted that listening comprehension received more emphasis than reading comprehension from the very start of the instructional programme. The skills were taught in the following sequence:

1. Recalling sequence of events.
2. Selecting main idea.
3. Selecting supporting details.
4. Making inferences.
5. Drawing conclusions.
6. Predicting outcomes.

Short stories and poems which lent themselves to the type of questions aimed at developing these skills were used for either listening or reading comprehension exercises. One very important approach that was stressed was that of encouraging students to defend their answers. It was by examining carefully the answers given and the justifications put forward for such answers that students derived the greatest benefits from the training given.

It is to be noted that the students in the segregated classes in word recognition did not receive the special training in comprehension. This was a decision which the leaders had to make in the interest of these students in the area of their greatest need —word recognition.

The teachers observed the classes in word recognition on the first two days of the week (Monday, Tuesday) and the classes in comprehension on the following two days (Wednesday, Thursday). As the teachers became more knowledgeable in the teaching of these skills, they gradually participated under supervision in the teaching of the classes.

Toward the middle of November, the students in the word recognition classes were returned to their classrooms (at school B the library was substituted for the classroom). Since there was one teacher to a class, it was incumbent on the leaders to demonstrate the methods and techniques of handling both these groups in a 40-minute reading period. The lesson plans were so designed that oral work and written work were carried on simultaneously and with the minimum degree of noise. The plan required that the better "readers" work mostly on their own while the word recognition groups continued to receive training in analysing words and reading simple graded materials. It is to be noted also that these more advanced "readers" were given training in the word recognition skills for at least ten minutes daily. The written work which was set them gave practice in both comprehension and word recognition skills.

In December the project was temporarily suspended at School B as domestic arrangements relating chiefly to the scheduling of classes and teachers clashed with the tight schedule planned for the execution of the project. During the first week in December the students at School A were given an interim testing in oral reading. The results were very encouraging; more than 50% of the group placed in the special classes at the beginning of the project were found to be "reading" at third-grade level or above.

Mention must be made here of the strides made by two students at School A who at the beginning of the project were both "reading" at the grade level of 2.5. By the end of the nine weeks during which they received remedial instruction in word recognition, they were both "reading" at the fifth-grade level. There were other encouraging signs. As the students in the special classes became aware of the progress they were making, not only did they show more interest in wanting to read, but their whole personalities seemed to glow.

The leaders convened at the Institute of Education, University of the West Indies, each Friday morning to assess what had been accomplished, to specify the scheme for the following week, and to plan for the symposium in the afternoon.

The Friday afternoon symposium was mandatory for all project teachers since release time had been granted by the Ministry of Education for this purpose. At these conferences the methods used by the leaders in their demonstrations were discussed in detail. In addition, the teachers were introduced to several approaches to the teaching of reading and received systematic training at the teacher level in the sequence, methods, and approaches recommended for the effective teaching of phonetic analysis and structural analysis of words. During these symposiums, some very full and useful discussions took place on the topic of class organization for reading.

Below is a summary of the operational plan for the Christmas Term 1967:

School A	School B
1. Periods per week: 4 40' periods per class.	1. Periods per week: 4 40' periods per class.
2. Time: morning session	2. Time: afternoon session
3. Number of classes: 4	3. Number of classes: 2
4. Number of teachers: 4	4. Number of teachers: 2
5. Programme:	5. Programme:
a. Administering the diagnostic survey instruments outlined in Table	a. Administering the diagnostic survey instruments outlined in Table.

School A	School B
b. Training in word recognition skills.	b. Training in word recognition skills.
c. Training in comprehension and listening skills.	c. Training in comprehension and listening skills.
6. Class organization: two-group plan -- special classes in the library, returned to classroom by mid-November.	6. Class organization: two-group plan -- special classes in the library.
7. Symposium: Friday afternoons.	7. Symposium: Friday afternoons.

EASTER TERM 1968

In January of this term, the project was reinstituted at School B. The situation posed some problems for the leaders where planning of programmes for each school, allocation of time at each school, and holding of symposiums were concerned.

Different programmes had to be planned for School A and School B since there were then at School B three project classes different from the two which originally started with the project. This meant that these students had to be tested and then put through a type of instructional programme similar to the one that was pursued at School A in the previous term. Because the procedure at one school

was so different from that in the other school, separate reports will be given for School A and School B.

School B

Since all seventh-graders had been given the tests of letter sounds associations at the beginning of the project, it was not necessary to give these tests again to the new class. The other tests were given in the same order in which they were given in the first term and by the same leaders, excepting that Mrs. Box assisted Mrs. Cady in administering the oral reading tests so that the instructional programme at School B could begin within a week of testing.

The results of the tests administered at the beginning of the term were not far different from those obtained by the other classes in the first term. On the basis of the oral reading tests, 23% of the 142 students tested were reading at or below second-grade level. More than 83% of the students scored two grades or more below their grade level in the comprehension tests. The scores in the listening tests were exceedingly low.

The instructional programme for both groups was carried out

in the library. Those placed in the special classes for word recognition were segregated from the rest of the students by a portable chalkboard in order to help them develop a better self-concept and to protect them from the ridicule of their classmates. The special classes in word recognition were taught by Mrs. Box and the programme followed was similar to that carried out at School A in the previous term. The classes for the better "readers" were taught by Mrs. Cady. These were divided into two groups for instruction in word recognition and comprehension.

By mid term the students were regrouped for instruction. Those "reading" at or above fourth-grade level were placed in one group and those "reading" below fourth-grade level were placed in another group. The newly-formed groups continued in the programme that Mrs. Cady was giving the classes she taught before this.

The three teachers who were then participating in the project were new to the remedial instructional programme and had to be given the same intensive training as the kind received by the teachers the term before. The leaders therefore deemed it advisable to spend no less than four periods per week with each class and to schedule Wednesday afternoons for holding symposiums with the teachers. These symposiums followed the pattern

established in the first term.

After the mid term holiday, the leaders shared the work load in that no leader spent more than two periods per week with a class.

School A

There being no setbacks at School A, the project progressed to the next stage without any difficulty. The two-group plan of class organization was implemented without delay since the teachers were oriented to this type of organization by the middle of November of the previous term. Those students who were "reading" at and above fourth-grade level were placed in one group for instruction, and those who were "reading" below fourth-grade level were placed in another group.

Since the leaders had to give more supervision to the project at School B and since the teachers at School A had by now acquired some of the technics of handling remedial instruction in reading, the leaders decided they could not spend more than one period per week with each class. It followed then that the leaders scheduled Mondays for School A, Mrs. Cady working through the first two sessions and Mrs. Box being responsible for the following two

sessions. Each Monday the leaders demonstrated the teaching of word recognition skills, comprehension skills, and listening skills in a class situation organized for instruction on a two-group plan.

Since the leaders would not be at School A for four out of five teaching days, the weekly symposiums held on Mondays were used up mainly in discussing each week's plan and in assessing the students' performances in the previous week. The teachers were assisted in getting out reading materials for oral and written work, essentially diagnostic in design; which meant that the week's work for each group was based on the performance of the group in the previous week.

The leaders recognized the fact that systematic training in the listening skills was still necessary at this stage and assisted the teachers in planning a programme in listening skills to be taught in three fifteen-minute periods per week and on each Friday.

In order that a close check be kept on the project at School A, the teachers were asked to submit to the leaders detailed reports of their week's work.

A summary of the operational plan for the Easter Term, 1968 follows:

School A	School B
1. Periods per week: 1 40' period per week.	1. Periods per week: 4 40' period per week.
2. Time: morning session	2. Time: morning session
3. Number of classes: 4	3. Number of classes: 3
4. Number of teachers: 4	4. Number of teachers: 3
5. Programme:	5. Programme:
a. Training in word recognition skills.	a. Administering oral reading tests, comprehension tests, and listening tests.
b. Training in comprehension and listening skills.	b. Training in word recognition skills.
	c. Training in comprehension and listening skills.
6. Class organization: two-group plan --	6. Class organization: two-group plan -- special classes segregated by chalkboard for first half of the term.
7. Symposiums: Monday afternoons.	7. Symposiums: Wednesday afternoons.

SUMMER TERM 1968

There was very little change in the organization of classes and

the planning of lessons for this term. The reason is that at School A and School B both the teachers and the students were the same ones involved in the project for at least the term before. The leaders felt, therefore, that their time could then be evenly divided between both schools and that the work load could also be equally shared by them both. Following on this decision, the leaders arranged to spend Mondays and Tuesdays at School A and Wednesdays and Thursdays at School B. At School A, Mrs. Cady assumed responsibility for the first two sessions of each day, and Mrs. Box for the last two sessions. At School B, Mrs. Cady visited on Wednesdays and Mrs. Box on Thursdays. At both schools the teachers worked independently for the other three teaching days but submitted weekly reports of the work done to the leaders at each symposium.

During each two-day visit to a school, the teachers demonstrated the teaching of the skills in word recognition and comprehension while the teachers observed. On the following day, the teachers taught their classes under supervision.

The instructional programme for this term followed the same pattern as that put into effect at both schools in the Easter term. Both written and oral work aimed at mastery in the word recognition

skills and in comprehension skills.

The symposiums which were still kept apart for both schools were devoted chiefly to discussions relating to class organization, weekly plans, student growth, and classroom climate.

The last two weeks were set apart for the post-testing of these students. The tests used at this stage are set out below:

1. Tests of letter sounds associations for consonants, vowels, and common endings in other syllables.

2. Informal oral reading tests of word recognition, using graded material.[7]

3. Comprehension tests.

It is to be noted that toward the middle of the term one of the teachers at School B went on leave. This meant that one class was left without a teacher. Mrs. Cady and Mrs. Box took the responsibility of teaching this class so that they could continue in the project.

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[7] Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY, PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED, CONCLUSIONS OF THE INVESTIGATORS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The justification of organizing remedial reading classes for junior secondary school pupils has been confirmed by the findings of this study. It should be repeated here that the design of the project aimed at the improvement of the skills in word recognition, comprehension, and listening.

The achievements of the students in oral "reading" were very encouraging. Table 1 shows the gains made in oral reading on the basis of the oral reading tests of those students who at the time when they became involved in the project were reading below grade level. The normal gain for a student is 8/10ths for the period of the study.

TABLE 1

Gains made by Students "Reading" below Grade Level When They Became Involved in the Project

	School A				School B		
	Involvement in Project: Sept. 1967-June 1968				Involvement in Project: Jan. 1968 - June 1968		
Gains in Grade Levels	Classes and No. of Students				Classes and No. of Students		
	A1	A3	B1	B3	7^1	7^2	7^3
0	2	5	1	5	4	4	6
+1	8	12	13	10	13	13	15
+2	9	3	10	10	9	20	13
+3	6	7	10	7	5	5	6
+4	3	1	-	9	2	-	-
+5	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
No. tested	29	28	35	41	33	42	40
No. absent	1	3	2	4	14	5	4

The diagram below (Fig. 1) shows on a comparative basis the oral "reading" achievements of the students at both schools. It is to be noted that School A had been involved in the project for three terms as compared with School B which had been associated with the project for just two terms.

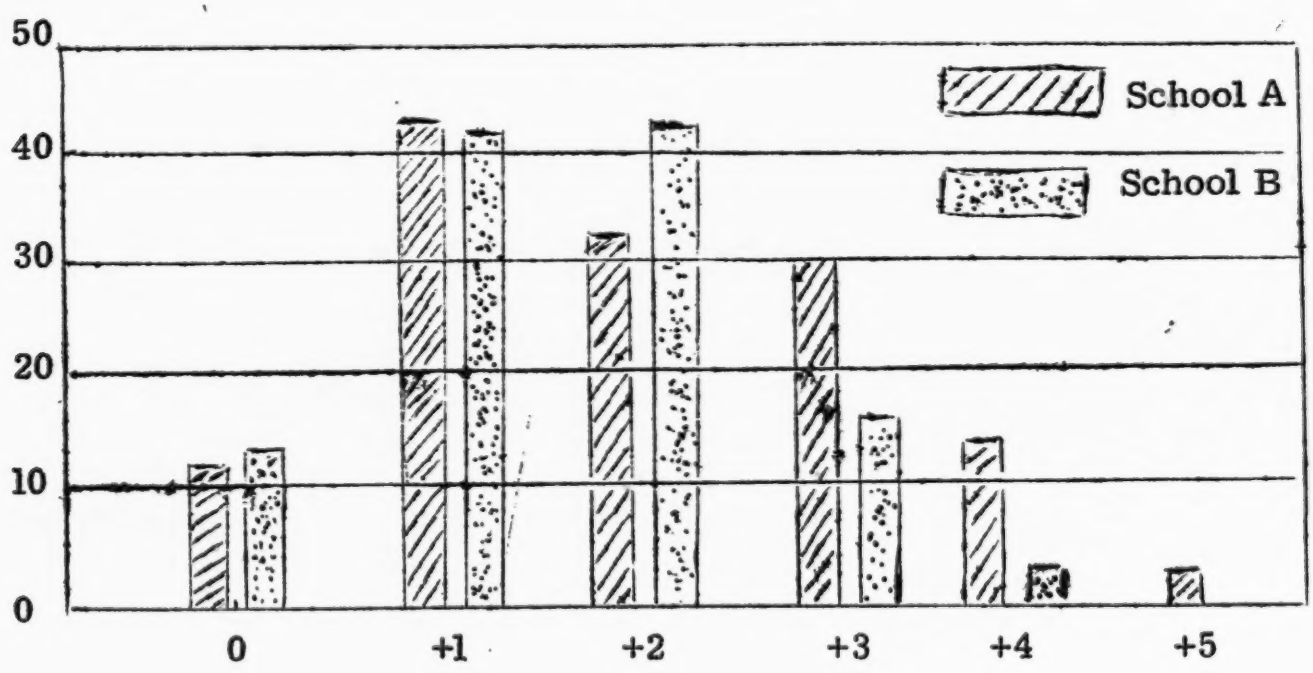

Fig. 1 : Comparison of students' achievements in oral "reading" on a school to school basis.

An examination of the scores obtained on the comprehension tests given to the students at School A and at School B in September 1967 and January 1968 respectively and again in June 1968 indicates that there were significant gains in the achievements of the students. A breakdown of these results is given in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Percentage of Students Rating at Grade 6 Level or above in Reading Comprehension

	School A				School B		
Involvement in Project: Sept. 1967					Involvement in Project: Jan. 1968		
Months	A^1	A^3	B^1	B^3	7^1	7^2	7^3
September 1967	38%	24%	17%	2%	21%	18%	19%
June 1968	72%	35%	34%	17%	21%	21%	35%
Gain	34%	11%	17%	15%	-	3%	16%

By comparing the achievements of the students of School A with those of School B, however, the results of the comprehension tests (Table 2) show that the students at School A who became involved in the project at the very beginning were superior in comprehension to those at School B who had been involved in the project for only two terms.

The achievements of the students at School A are more clearly represented in Fig. 2.

SCHOOL A

Percentage of Students

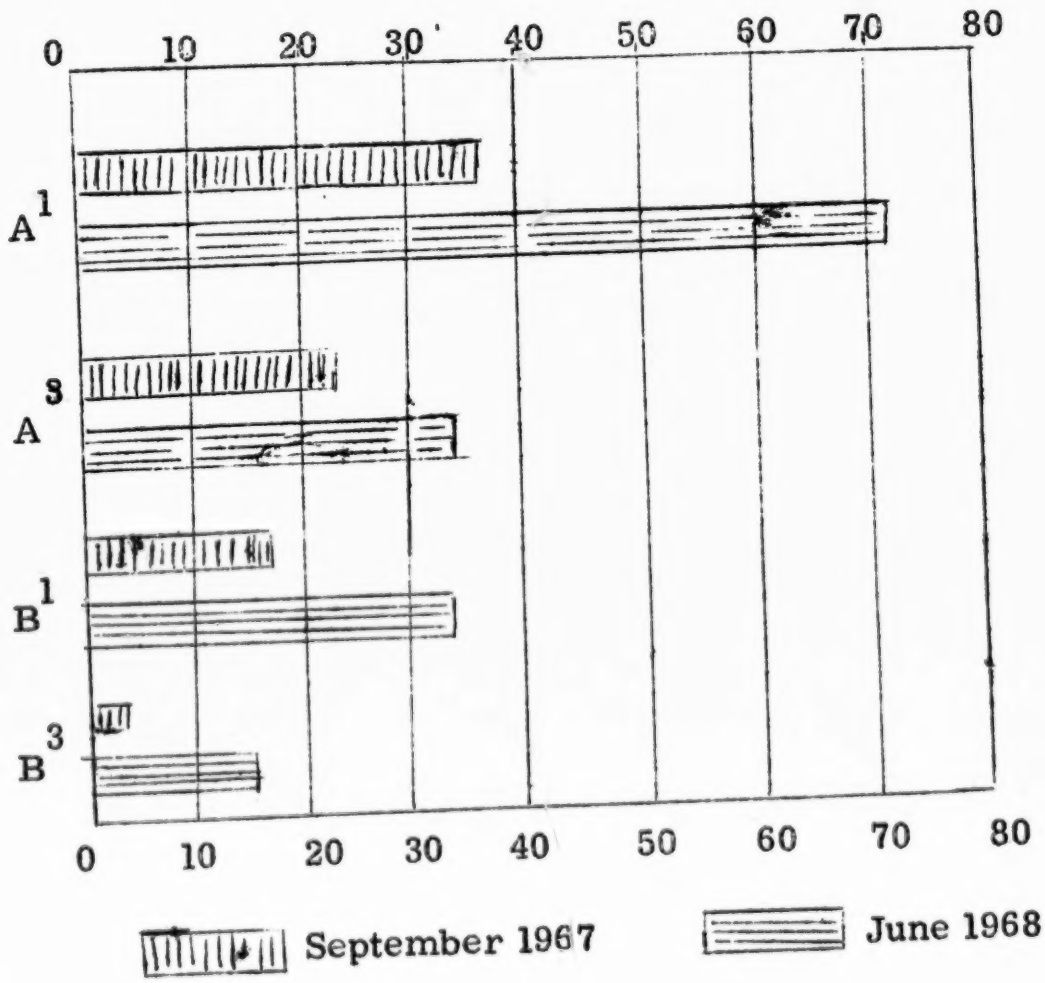

Fig. 2 : Percentage gains in the number of students at School A who scored at or above the sixth-grade level on the basis of the results of the comprehension tests given in September 1967 and June 1968.

During the second term of the school year, when the leaders commented on the slow rate at which the students seemed to be developing the ability to comprehend the written and spoken work, a local educationist who was interested in the project raised the issue that this weakness in comprehension could be due to interferences caused by the difficulty students in general might be experiencing with having to cope with the strangeness of the American accent of one of the leaders. This view was tested in both schools. It was interesting to note that only in one class were there any obvious differences in the scores in favour of the Jamaican accent, and in this class no student in September was reading at grade level.

In September 1967 the tests of letter sounds associations were given to all seventh-graders in both schools. These tests were again administered to the same groups in June 1968. Between September 1967 and June 1968, the project classes at School A had been receiving systematic instruction in the word recognition skills. The project classes at School B had been receiving such instruction only since January 1968. The results at the end of the school year (Tables 3, 4, and 5) show that the project classes were significantly superior to the children in the other classes in the skills tested.

TABLE 3

Percentage of Students Making Less than Two Errors
on the Consonant Test

	School A								School B							
	Project Classes				Other Classes				Project Classes			Other Classes				
	A^1	A^3	B^1	B^3	A^2	B^2	C^1	C^2	7^1	7^2	7^3	7^4	7^5	7^6	7^7	
	%				%				%			%				
September 1967	74	38	36	2	24	24	2	12	38	32	36	37	40	42	44	
June 1968	**94**	60	53	19	49	23	2	14	47	34	46	45	34	30	32	
Gain	20	22	17	17	25	-	-	2	9	2	10	8	-	-	-	

TABLE 4

Percentage of Students Making Less than Two Errors
on the Vowel Test

	School A								School B							
	Project Classes				Other Classes				Project Classes			Other Classes				
	A^1	A^3	B^1	B^3	A^2	B^2	C^1	C^2	7^1	7^2	7^3	7^4	7^5	7^6	7^7	
	%				%				%			%				
September 1967	40	16	11	-	28	6	5	9	6	17	36	14	23	7	16	
June 1968	42	28	29	13	20	4	5	8	12	22	47	9	19	5	13	
Gain	2	12	18	13	-	-	-	-	6	5	11	-	-	-	-	

TABLE 5

Percentage of Students Making Less Than Two Errors
in the Test on Prefixes and Suffixes

	School A								School B							
	Project Classes				Other Classes				Project Classes			Other Classes				
	A^1	A^3	B^1	B^3	A^2	B^2	C^1	C^2	7^1	7^2	7^3	7^4	7^5	7^6	7^7	
	%				%				%			%				
September 1967	18	18	15	-	26	2	-	10	20	19	9	7	11	11	16	
June 1968	74	33	53	22	23	3	2	8	23	27	16	7	10	9	27	
Gain	56	15	38	22	-	1	2	-	3	8	7	-	-	-	11	

Figures 3, 4, and 5 give a clear picture of the achievements in the area of the word recognition skills of the project classes as compared with the achievements of the other classes which were not involved in the project.

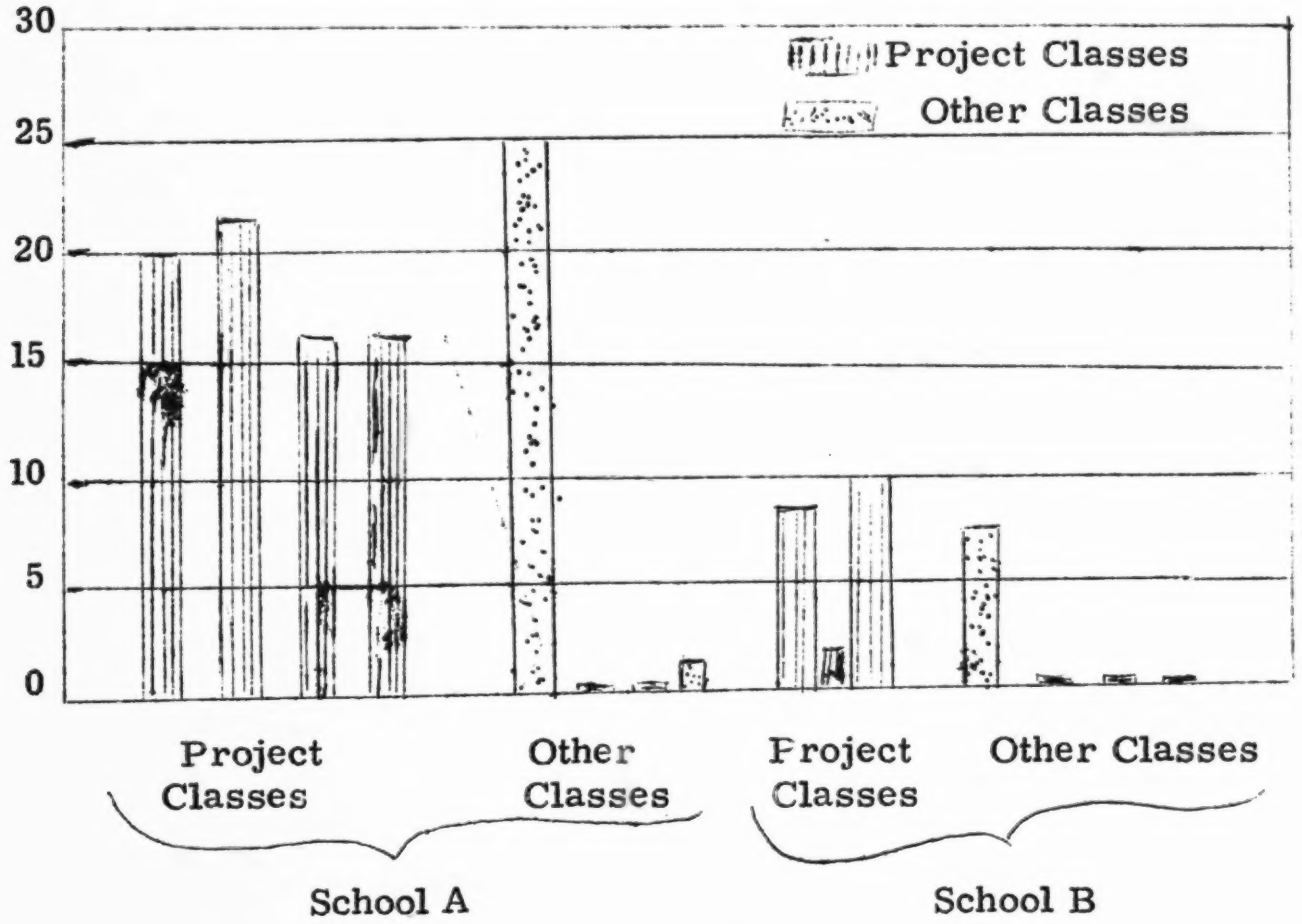

Fig. 3: Percentage gains in the number of students making less than two errors on the basis of the results of the consonant tests administered in September 1967 and in June 1968.

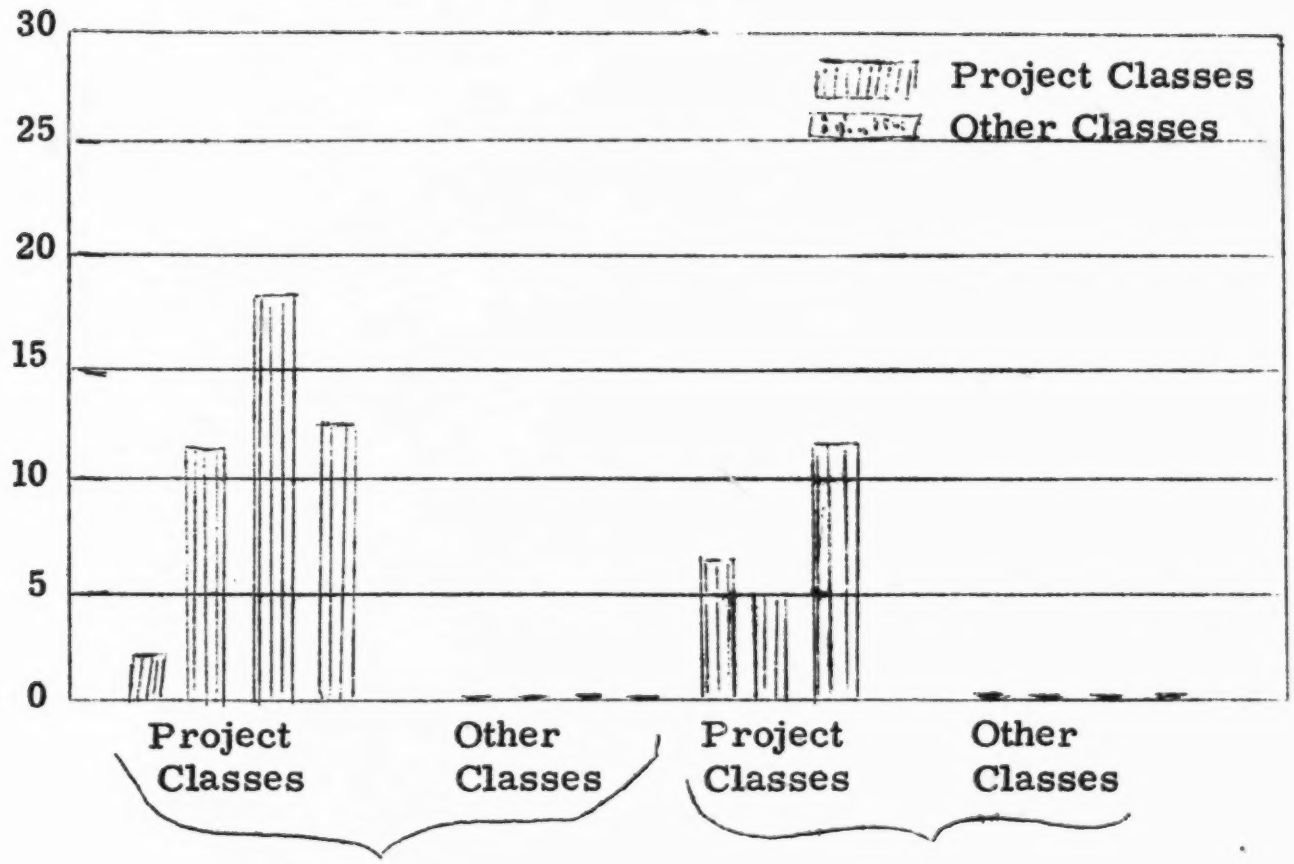

Fig. 4: Percentage gains in the number of students making less than two errors on the basis of the results of the vowel tests administered in September 1967 and in June 1968.

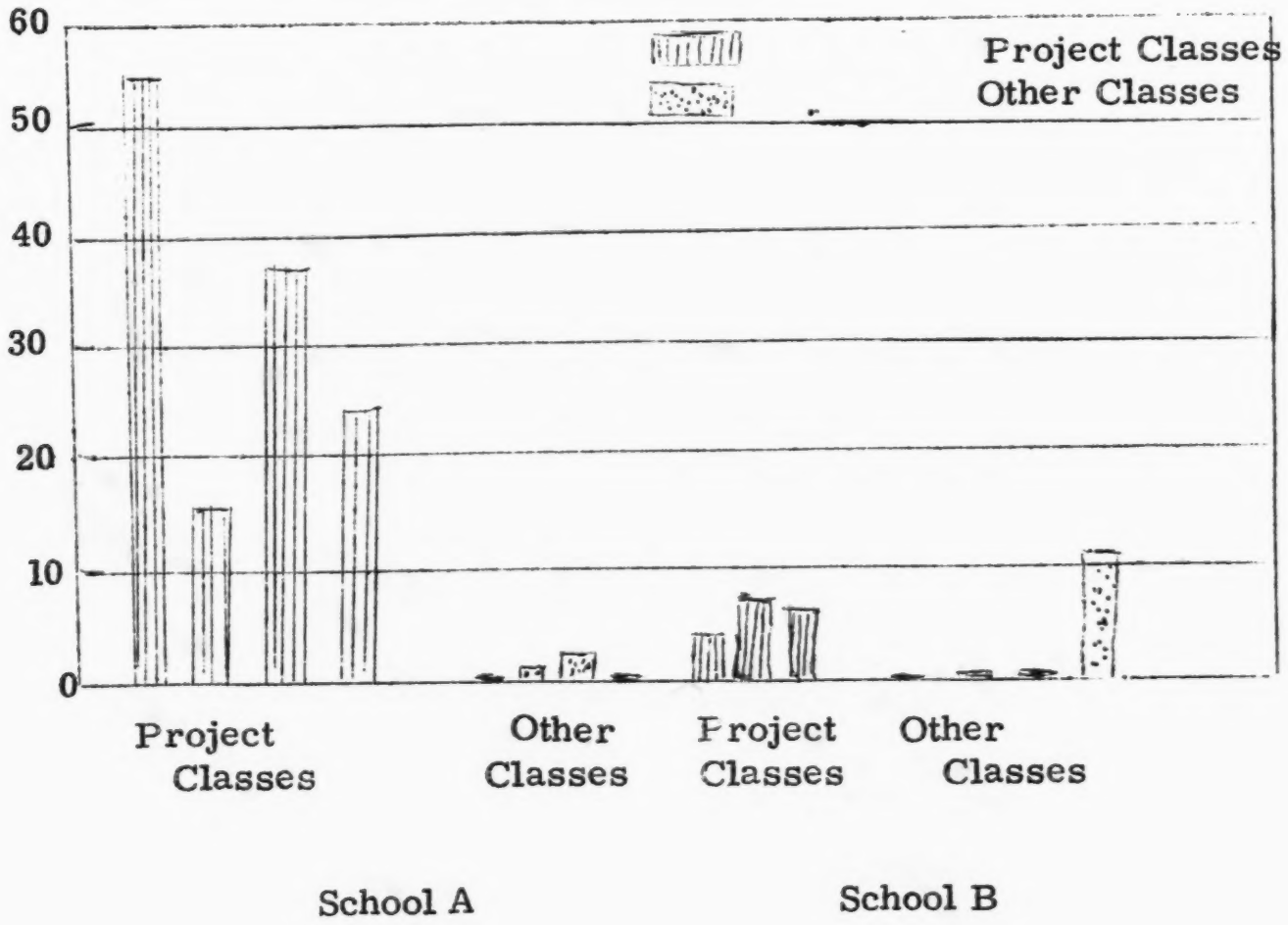

Fig. 5: Percentage gains in the number of students making less than two errors on the basis of the results of the tests in prefixes and suffixes administered in September 1967 and in June 1968.

On the basis also of the results at School A, one could generalize that the students at School B would have shown better progress if they had been associated with the project from its inception.

II. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Noise Factors

There are some noises which are unavoidable but do not distract pupils and teachers. There are some noises which are unavoidable but do distract children and teachers. With the latter type, teachers can often lessen the distraction to their pupils by adjustment of the daily program.

There are some other noises, however, which are distracting and avoidable. It is to consideration of ones such as these that this section is addressed.

The four avoidable noise factors which the leaders found disturbing to them and to their classes were: (1) loud teachers' voices, particularly when used in prolonged harangue of pupils, (2) the sound of a strap or cane in action, (3) the scraping of metal chairs on cement floors, and (4) the sound of cars being driven on gravel close to the classroom.

Factor (1) was the first to be attacked. Since the leaders shared half of the small library room at School A and a home economics teacher conducted her class in the remaining half of the room, it was a simple matter to demonstrate that three teachers could conduct separate classes satisfactorily in the same room. This situation was observed by the headmistress who brought it to the attention of her staff.

Factor (2) was the next to be attacked. The leaders felt that the sound of a strap or cane being used in another room aroused empathy in the project students and distracted their attention. At School A the problem was presented to the headmistress who, in turn presented it to her staff. As Christmas Term progressed, these two factors gradually decreased until they ceased to be irritants to the leaders and their students. At School B, however, the library, which was used by the project classes, adjoined the headmaster's office. Corporal punishment was administered here and, because the walls were thin, this sound and the reactions of the recipients continued to be disturbing elements.

Factor (3), the sound of metal chairs scraping on the cement floor, could not be completely eliminated but was reduced to a level of tolerance. The headmaster cooperated by having rubber

tips put on the legs of the chairs; the leaders secured the students' cooperation in handling the chairs more carefully.

As to factor (4), the only action taken by the leaders was to avoid driving their own cars near classrooms or, if this were not possible, to move their cars at the beginning or end of a class period. The leaders are convinced, however, that the practice of driving close to classrooms, so common in Jamaica, should be studied at Ministry level.

Other Distractions

It seemed to the leaders that their classes were interrupted too frequently by people delivering messages or requesting information. Rarely was the interruption justified. Again, no overt action was taken, but it is recommended that this matter be studied at Ministry level.

Problems Concerning Students

Students had been required to furnish their own pens and do their written work in ink. At each class session, there were

some students who did not have pens, and much time was lost in the process of borrowing and returning pens. The leaders thereupon furnished pencils and erasers, as well as all other materials, for their classes, and this problem ceased to exist.

"Copying" was another outstanding problem. This was alleviated by supplying the students with "cover sheets" and by inculcating in them an understanding of the purposes of their written work and the attitudes of the leaders toward student performance.

A third problem was the lack of independent behavior of many students. As a teacher explained a point or gave directions, some of the students listened, others did not attempt to listen but depended upon their classmates to relay information. Some did not attempt to follow written directions, either, relying on the teacher to paraphrase the material. Early efforts to correct this met with resistance, and sometimes open defiance, but, as students realized that there would be no punitive action, physical or otherwise, for failure, and that they could progress with teacher guidance, they cooperated well.

The most serious problem observed was in the area of "classroom climate". The leaders adhered to the philosophy that a classroom must be a laboratory where pupils are free to learn

without fear of being ridiculed by their peers or punished by their teachers. Thus, they seized every opportunity to help teachers develop with their students a better learning situation.

Reading Problems

The language of the texts was not the same language that the student ~~speaks~~ spoke, and frequently it was not the same language that his teacher ~~speaks~~ spoke in the classroom. It was also apparent that the students had had no training in word attack skills. When a pupil encountered a new word, he would ask someone to tell him how to say it. A weak reader used another approach to unlocking a word he did not immediately recognize: he called out the names of the letters in sequence, then named the word. The child was not reacting to seeing the word nor to the sounds of the letters, but to the sounds of the names of the letters. The writers have been unable to find any reference in the literature to this particular "spelling approach". They theorized that this may be a distortion of the spelling approach used in some English-speaking countries more than fifty years ago. It seemed apparent that this "Jamaican spelling approach" is a serious deterrent to progress in

word recognition.

Problems with Teachers

"Reading" retardation seemed to be equated with mental retardation. Teachers believed that, if a student could not read, he lacked the mental ability to learn. (Admittedly, this is true in some cases, and, in the absence of intelligence tests, an experienced and perceptive teacher may correctly reach this conclusion in a number of cases). There are many research studies which show that, for some reason yet unknown, there are a number of children of normal or higher intelligence who do not perceive symbols before the age of 9 - 11 years but whose listening comprehension is high, and that approximately 80% of these children are boys. Research also indicates that all but 5% of these children develop rapidly in word recognition technics when given appropriate instruction when they are ready for it. Usually, the approach in remedial reading clinics consists of training in phonetic analysis and structural analysis of words, or a modified linguistic approach.

The diction of some of the project teachers was below

standard. This is not to say that they were speaking "patois", but that they were mispronouncing certain consonants, digraphs, and clusters. For example, "three" was pronounced with the tongue initially behind the teeth and was spoken "tree" or something between "tree" and "three", "them" as "dem", initial "h" was dropped so that "he" became " 'e", "house" because "'ouse", etc. In some words beginning with vowels, but not in all, an "h" preceded the word, as "hoil" for "oil" (or even "hile"!) Another flagrant example was "hyâr" for "year".

The teachers believed that, if a child could pronounce words, he could understand what he "read". This is a commonly accepted theory of teachers in developed countries also. Research does not support this belief. Too often the complaint comes from the institutions of higher education, "University students are sadly deficient in comprehension". Recently, the writer noted a report from Oxford University deploring the lack of comprehension skills of entering students. Thus, the project leaders found it necessary to devote as much time as possible to identifying the skills of comprehension in the symposiums and to demonstrating the teaching of these skills in the classroom.

The teachers also felt that the skills of reading should have

been taught in primary or junior schools. Reading experts have for some time advocated the teaching of reading skills should continue through secondary schools; some contend that training in reading should continue in the university. The reader may be interested in a report of a study directed by Dr. Mary Austin of the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University in the United States and financed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York[1], in which it was recommended that college instructors take greater responsibility in making certain that their students have mastered the principles of phonetic and structural analysis of words, that the skills of comprehension be taught to college students, and that a course in the teaching of basic reading be required of all prospective secondary school teachers.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The problem of reading retardation in Jamaica does not stem, in most cases, from students' lack of intelligence. Nor does it

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[1]Mary C. Austin, The Torch Lighters (Massachusetts: Harvard University Graduate School of Education, 1960).

stem from lack of interesting materials for the child to read. There is plenty of material available in Jamaica to use in the teaching of reading: books supplied by the Ministry, library books, the weekly newspaper supplied by THE GLEANER, books bought by children and school boards, and books donated to the schools by various organizations here and abroad.

The problem does lie in the lack of teachers trained to teach reading at all levels. Jamaica needs to:

1. Help teachers develop an understanding of the reading process -- word recognition and comprehension.

2. Help teachers understand that weakness in word recognition and weakness in comprehension are not usually found in cohabitation.

3. Help teachers become aware of the correlation between reading ability and intelligence at various age levels.

4. Train teachers in modern methods of teaching reading, with particular emphasis on methods adaptable to large classes.

5. Help teachers plan programs that will enable each child to develop in word recognition.

6. Help teachers develop the skills of listening comprehension in themselves and in their pupils.

7. Help teachers develop the skills of reading comprehension in themselves and in their pupils through a variety of written materials.

8. Train teachers in the administration of informal tests of reading.

9. Train teachers in the interpretation of test results.

10. Help teachers in the organization of their classes.

11. Help teachers in improving their diction.

Frequently, as a study progresses, the investigators become aware of certain "fringe benefits" that have occurred to the principals involved. This study was no exception. Some of these benefits are described below:

1. Teachers became excited about the teaching of reading.

2. Classroom climate improved; teachers became more aware of the problems of their students; their attitudes toward the so-called "backward readers" were more encouraging; teacher-pupil relations improved.

3. The students' auding ability may have improved because they had to listen more intently to the American leader because of her accent.

4. The diction of the students improved. They became interested in "talking right", sought help from the project leaders, and at times helped each other to overcome blatant errors.

5. The behavior of students improved. At one school, where at first they had fought over chairs, grabbed pencils and other materials from each other, they learned better modes of behavior.

6. Students learned to perform many non-teaching duties in their classroom.

This section cannot close without mentioning that some "fringe benefits" also occurred to the American leader who had to listen

more carefully to students' speech and whose vocabulary was increased by her contact with the students. One example illustrates this point. When she wanted a child to erase the board, she had to remember to say, "Rub it out, please". By the time she learned to say this readily, the students were using the American expression even more readily!

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The project leaders recommend that consideration be given to certain innovations and revisions in the training of teachers at the teacher training colleges and at the University of the West Indies:

1. The basic course in word recognition should be changed from "look-and-say" and the "Jamaican spelling method" (ref. p.) to a phonetic and structural analysis approach.

2. A sequential development of comprehension skills should be emphasized.

3. There should be instruction in the use of teachers' manuals for teaching reading.

4. Teachers-in-training should be taught the uses of varied materials to develop the skills of word recognition and reading comprehension.

5. They should be taught the uses of varied materials to

develop the skills of listening.

6. Courses in the teaching of remedial reading should be added to the curriculum, particularly at the university level.

7. Measures to train teachers in correct diction and in correct pronunciation should be instituted.

The project leaders recommend that a series of workshops be devoted to the in-service training of teachers in:

1. An understanding of the remedial reader.

2. An understanding of the reading process: word recognition and comprehension.

3. Methods of teaching listening skills.

4. Methods of teaching word recognition.

5. Methods of teaching the skill of comprehension.

6. Methods of teaching reading in the subject areas.

7. Types of class organization.

The project leaders recommend that class time be used more profitably.

1. Messages, except for those of great urgency, should not be delivered while class is in session.

2. A five-minute break should be established for the changing of classes.

3. A study should be made of noise interference -- loud voices, shifting of furniture, clapping for attention, finger-snapping, television sound, car parking, etc.

4. Children should be permitted to use pencils 'with erasers) in their written work. Pencils are cheaper. Erasure of "pencil errors" would not cause as much untidiness as obliteration of "pen errors."

5. The program for the first period of the day needs revision. Time is lost because students and teachers sometimes arrive late. (Much of this "late arrival" problem may at present be unavoidable because of transportation difficulties.)

6. Curtailment of school activities on Fridays should be discontinued.

7. Staff meetings should be held outside of school hours.

8. The employment of non-professional persons to assist the teachers should be considered.

9. Oral language and listening skills should be time-tabled for all students in the junior secondary schools.

10. Special class periods should be devoted to the teaching of reading apart from "English."

11. Children in need of remedial reading should not be required to study a foreign language.

12. Students should participate in the planning and evaluation of their work.

At School A, 6-7 periods per week were devoted to reading and library, 3-6 periods per week to language arts in the seventh grade project classes. At School B, 5 periods per week were devoted to instruction in reading skills.

V. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION RESEARCH

During the school year in which this study was made, the project leaders observed some areas which they felt need to be studied at the junior secondary level:

1. The listening skills of students.

2. The oral language of students and teachers and the influence on reading.

3. The teaching of remedial reading using linguistic materials projected on a screen. There is reason to believe that this approach may be appropriate and economical for teaching remedial reading to Jamaica's "backward readers."

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